

THE AUSTRALIAN 11/2006

Sounds From A Bygone Age - Vol. 3

Dona Dumitru Siminicã

Asphalt Tango/Planet

ANTONY (Hegarty) and other androgynous pop stars pale beside Dona Dumitru Siminicã. Tiny Tim is a midget by comparison! In the pantheon of high falsetto, the late Romanian gypsy singer is the equal of the castrato king himself. Like 18th century superstar Farinelli, Siminicã, who passed away in the 1980s, drove the ladies into a frenzy with his upper register warbling. Siminicã's soulful but sombre songs, sung in Romanian and the Romany language, provided solace for the lonely and the lovesick of Bucharest café society. For this seminal sixties¹ session the virtuoso vocalist and violinist surrounded himself with a dream team of musicians: on cymbalon (a kind of hammered dulcimer), accordion and double bass. The result is one of the best recordings of the idiom known as *muzica lãutãreascã*. The distinctive chopping rhythm of the instruments, allied to Siminicã's superior sonic qualities, make for mesmerising music. Small wonder that the sounds from this part of Europe are in vogue at the moment

Tony Hillier